(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the objectives of setting up of said Commission;

(d) what would be the strength of the members in the said Commission; and

(e) what are the other steps proposed to regulate prices of iron and steel products?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (d) In the 18th National Steel Consumers' Council (NSCC) meeting held in June, 2004, some consumers suggested formation of a National Steel Regulatory Body for keeping a check on steel prices. It was decided that the proposal would be examined by the Government.

(e) In a liberalized and deregulated environment, the Government does not intervene directly to influence prices. Prices are determined by free interplay of market forces of demand and supply.

VSP Plan to acquire stake in Australian Coal Mines

158. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Vizag Steel Plant is negotiating with some coal companies of Australia to pick up 40 per cent stake in their mines;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the expected cost of the initiative to the company;

(d) the total metallurgical coal required for Vizag Steel Plant during the last five years; year-wise; and

(e) the amount of metallurgical coal imported by Vizag Steel Plant during the last five years; year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(d) The total metallurgical coal consumed by RINL/VSP during the last five years, year-wise is given below:

(Unit:'000t)

Year	Imported coking coal	Imported soft coking coal	Medicum coking-coal	Total
1999-2000	1299	103	64	1466
2000-2001	1761	5889		1908
2001-2002	2667	0	325	2992
2002-2003	2762	0	400	3162
2003-2004	2710	47	449	3206

(e) The amount of metallurgical coal imported by RINL/VSP during the last five years; year-wise is given below:

(Unit:'000t)

Year	Metallurgical Coal
1999-2000	1507
2000-01	1984
2001-02	2924
2002-03	2933
2003-04	2872

Hike in cost of steel production

†159. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that it has been assessed that as a result of recent hike in the price of coal the cost of steel-production is likely to be increased;

(b) if so, the likely per tonne hike expected; and

(c) the percentage of steel producing units dependent on the supply of coal by Coal India Limited?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.